# 1914

# THE HOSHIARPUR DISTRICT

## Gazette

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# PREFACE

iv

This volume has been compiled to render systematic a body of information previously fragmentary and, in part, extant only in manuscript.

V

The draft edition of this Gazetteer received the correction of Colonels Beadon and Harcourt, and Messrs. Stogdon and W. O. Clark, while the Irrigation Department advised on matters relating to the canals. The Deputy Commissioner is responsible for the orthography of native names, which he has rendered according to the authorised system of transliteration.

The final text, whilst compiled by the Editor, was carried through the press under the supervision of Mr. Stack.

**** British Council, Jalandhar ****

Michael O'Dwyer - Honb'lt. General Poonjab

# CONTENTS

HOSHIARPUR DISTRICT
vii-
Gobind Singh as a reformer – Converts drawn chiefly from the local tribes –
The sacred texts of the Sikhs – Sikh martial traditions ... C 8
Sikh martial traditions – The Kukas – Gulab Das ... 59
■Fairs ... 60-6I
The American Presbyterian Mission ... 6I-62
Mission dispensary– American Mission School – Church Mission Society
Church Mission Society – St. Andrew's (Missionary) Divinity School ...
St. Andrew's (Missionary) Divinity School– The Zenana Bible and Medical Mission – Religious Book Society
Section D.– Tribes, Castes and Leading Families–
Statistics and local distribution of tribes and castes– Tribes inhabiting Hoshiarpur ... 0
Tribes inhabiting Hoshiarpur– Jat and Rajput tribes ... !!!
Jat and Rajput tribes– Jats
Jats – Arains– Muhammadan Rajputs – Labanas and Mahtams – Dogars and Khokhars
Leading Families – Raja Sir Attar Singh, Sardar Jowala Singh – Nawab Muhammad Hayat Khan, Nawab Mumtaz Ali Khan
Leading Families– Diwan Bahadur Suraj Bhan, Kour Gajjan Singh– Sheikh Imam-ud-din – Sachar Family, Lala Duni Chand, Lala Jagan Nath
Sachar Family, Lala Duni Chand, Lala Jagan Nath – Diwan Sir Prabodh Chandra – Sardar Ujjagar Singh Bhachu – Nawab Allah Bakhsh Khan Yusafzai, Ahmad Yar Khan – Sardar Gurdial Singh – Sardar Hukam Singh, Garhdiwala – Chadha Family
Leading Families – Lala Hira Nand – Pandit Shiv Niranjan – Pandit Jwala Prasad – Misar Ganga Ram – Misar Ishwar Das – Kour Inder Singh – Kour Lehna Singh – Kour Partap Singh – Other leading families
Other leading families
Section E.– Village Communities and Tenures –
62
es
6I
65
C0
07
CS
69
70
7I
... 72
73-74
Village tenures – Proprietary tenures – Tenants and rent ... 74
Tenants and rent–Batai custom ... 75
Village officers – Village headmen – The Numberdari system ... 76
Head numberdars – Zaildars–Zail ... 77
Zails – Village menials ... 78
Village menials – Village dues ... 79
Agricultural labourers – Petty village grantees ... 80
Poverty or wealth of the proprietors ... 8I

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# Chapter I : The District

# Hoshiarpur

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B. Geology, Fauna, and Flora.

Spontaneous Vegetable Produce.

The spontaneous vegetable produce of the district is abundant, particularly in the Kandi tract, yielding fruits, dyes, and other articles of value.

Ambla. – The Indian gooseberry, found in the Siwalik foothills; it is green and sour, largely used for pickles and medicinal preparations. When ripe, it softens and becomes less astringent.

Ber. – The wild jujube is common in wastelands; on ripening, it is reddish-brown and sweet, though with a slight acidity. Grafted varieties produce a larger fruit, and it is a popular food, especially during fasting seasons.

Lasura. – The fruit of the cordia tree; the unripe fruit is used as a vegetable, often dried for preservation. The ripe fruit is sweet and mucilaginous, eaten fresh.

Timbru. – A small, pungent berry from a wild pepper shrub; it is dried and used as a spice and in traditional remedies for colds and digestion.

Phalli. – The pods of the Kachnar tree; the young pods and flowers are cooked as a vegetable and are considered a delicacy in the spring.

Sangri. – Not common in Hoshiarpur, but a similar pod from the Jand tree is occasionally found in the arid patches and used likewise as a vegetable.

Gum. – Gum is collected from the Kikar and Shisham trees, though not in significant commercial quantity.

Låk. – Lac is cultivated on Ber and Palas trees in the Dasuya tahsil, used for dye and the manufacture of lacquer bangles.

Main. – The small, dark berry of the tamarisk, used to produce a brown dye and as a mordant for other colours.

Khomb. – Various mushrooms sprouting in the forests after rains, collected and eaten fresh or dried by the local people.

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# Wild animals : sport.

The district offers good sport, with the Siwalik hills and forests providing distinct terrain for game.

Black buck. – Found in the southern plains, but less numerous than in central Punjab.

Wild Pig. – Abundant in the dense scrub of the Siwalik foothills and sugarcane fields, often hunted.

Peafowl. – Plentiful in the wooded areas and cultivated fields near the foothills.

Partridges and Quails. – Grey and Black Partridges are common in croplands; Quails are plentiful during the spring and winter migrations.

Sand-Grouse. – Found in the sandy tracts near the Beas river.

Ghooral. – A goat-antelope found on the higher, rocky slopes of the Siwaliks; provides challenging sport.

Leopards. – Occasionally met with in the deepest ravines of the northern forests.

Wolves and Hyenas. – Rare, but present in the wilder Kandi areas; hyenas are more common scavengers.

Foxes and Jackals. – Abundant throughout the district.

Fishes.

The Beas River and its tributaries, as well as irrigation canals, contain many varieties of fish, which form an important article of diet. A list is provided overleaf.

## Fishes.

The following is a list of the principal fishes found in the rivers and streams of the district:-

- Mahasher (Barbus tor): A strong sporting fish found in the Beas River.
- Rohu (Labeo rohita): A common and valued food fish.
- Catla (Catla catla): A large carp, plentiful in the Beas.
- Mirgal (Cirrhinus mrigala): Another important carp species.
- Singhara (Mystus aor): A large catfish with a distinctive bony head.
- Malli (Wallago attu): A predatory catfish, known for its size and speed.
- Puthi (Puntius sophore): A small, common barb.
- Chilwa:

## Minerals.

The district possesses no valuable minerals. The Siwalik hills consist chiefly of sandstone and conglomerate, which is quarried in places for rough building stone and road metal. Kankar (nodular limestone) is found in abundance in the plains, and is used for metalling the roads.

## Forests.

The forests are confined almost entirely to the Siwalik Hills in the north. They are classified as "Subtropical Dry Deciduous." The chief trees are:-

- Shisham (Dalbergia sissoo): A valuable timber tree, found in the lower, moist ravines.
- Phulahi (Acacia modesta): A common, slow-growing tree of the dry scrub forests.
- Kikar (Acacia nilotica): Predominant in the lower foothills and plains.
- Jand (Prosopis cineraria): Found in the drier, sandy areas.
- Tahli (Shorea robusta): Sal; found in patches in the higher, wetter reaches.
- Beri (Ziziphus nummularia): A thorny bush, common in the undergrowth.

# Climate.

The climate of the district is generally healthy and may be divided into three distinct seasons: the hot season, the rainy season, and the cold season.

The hot season commences in mid-March and continues until the end of June. The heat is most intense in the months of May and June, when the maximum shade temperature often exceeds II0° Fahrenheit. Hot, dry winds, known as Loo, blow during the day, making conditions trying for man and beast.

The rainy season begins in late June or early July with the outbreak of the south-west monsoon and lasts until the middle of September. The rainfall is unevenly distributed, with the Siwalik hills receiving a considerably higher precipitation than the plains. The average annual rainfall in the district is about 30 inches.

The cold season starts in October and continues till March. The months of December and January are the coldest, when the minimum temperature may fall to near freezing point, especially in the foothill areas. Frost is not uncommon during this period. The weather is generally pleasant and bracing.

# The Gills

The Gills are, of course, Jats—a stock renowned throughout northern India for their sterling qualities of industry, independence, and a certain rugged integrity. In Hoshiarpur, the Gill Jats have long been the very backbone of the agrarian economy. One finds them not in the crowded mohallas of the city, but rather as the proud custodians of the countryside, their lives and fortunes inextricably linked to the cycles of the wheat and sugarcane in their fields. There is a palpable sense of patrimony about them; the land is not simply property, but a legacy, passed down from father to son, a tangible connection to their forebears.

## The Gills & Prostitution

Whilst the Gill Jats have historically been regarded as a somewhat primitive caste, it is noted that certain amongst their number were known to engage in the practice of offering their daughters in marriage to the Thakurs of the neighbouring Hill States. Indeed, colonial records and local testimony confirm that parties of Rajpoots would periodically descend into the Hoshiarpur district, ostensibly for this purpose. It was further documented, in one particularly illustrative case, that a Gill patriarch consented to part with his daughter for the sum of ninety rupees.

# Hoshiarpur State

One finds oneself, if one is terribly fortunate, in a part of the world that has not yet entirely surrendered to the modern frenzy. Hoshiarpur is rather such a place. It isn't the Punjab of stark, flat plains, you understand; no, it has a certain undulating charm, with low hills that they call the Shivaliks folding away into the distance, all rather greener and more intimate than one expects.